



Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman Ingram.

ROLL CALL BY CLERK OF COUNCIL

PRESENT: Mayor Lori A. Cockrell
Vice Mayor Amber F. Veitenthal
Councilwoman Melissa DeDomenico-Payne
Councilman Joshua L. Ingram
Councilman H. Bruce Rappaport
Councilman R. Wayne Sealock
Councilman Glenn E. Wood

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Manager Joseph W. Petty
Town Attorney George M. Sonnett, Jr.
Clerk of Council Tina L. Presley

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – *Councilman Ingram moved seconded by Vice Mayor Veitenthal moved that Council approve the Council meeting minutes of November 24 2025 Regular Meeting, and December 1, 2025 Work Session, as presented.*

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Wood, Veitenthal, Sealock, Rappaport, Ingram, DeDomenico-Payne

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

ADDITION/DELETION OF ITEMS FROM THE AGENDA OR REVISION TO ORDER OF BUSINESS – *Councilman Sealock moved seconded by Councilman Wood that Council remove Item #9 from the agenda.*

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Wood, Veitenthal, Sealock, Rappaport, Ingram, DeDomenico-Payne

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

RECOGNITIONS/AWARDS/REPORTS

Mayor Cockrell and Council recognized and thanked Nicholas Bass for his four years of service on the Front Royal Economic Development Authority (FREDA).

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

PUBLIC COMMENTS NOT RELATED TO PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

REPORTS– REMOVED

Town Manager Report

Town Council Reports

Report of the Mayor



CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Purchase/Installation of Variable Frequency Drive for Final Clarifier #2 at the Wastewater Treatment Plant

Council approved the purchase and installation of a variable frequency drive for final clarifier #2 at the Wastewater Treatment Plant from Evoqua Water Technologies in the amount of \$133,094.76.

Approval of the Award of a Task Order for Solids Dewatering Preliminary Engineering Report/FY26 Budget Transfer

Council approved awarding a task order for solids dewatering preliminary engineering report to CHA Consulting Inc in the amount of \$270,000.00 and a FY26 Budget Transfer to allocate the funds.

Vice Mayor Veitenthal moved seconded by Councilman Sealock that Council approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Wood, Veitenthal, Sealock, Rappaport, Ingram, DeDomenico-Payne

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

BUSINESS ITEMS

Amendments to the Town of Front Royal Policy for Vacation of Public Rights-of-Way

Councilwoman DeDomenico-Payne move seconded by Councilman Wood that Council approve and adopt the Town of Front Royal Policy for Vacation of Public Rights-of-Way as presented.

Vice Mayor Veitenthal voiced concern of ambiguity and contradiction with the Policy's Section 5.A.iii "Pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2008, the sale price shall be no greater than the property's fair market value or its contributory value to the abutting property, whichever is greater, or the amount agreed to by the parties. The fair market value shall be determined by the average price per square foot for all abutting properties at their current tax assessed value provided by Commissioner of the Revenue's Office, and the sale price will then be calculated by the total area of land to be purchased." She understood the policy would be written to avoid future negotiations. Town Manager Joe Petty explained that the reference to the state code could not be removed and the reference to the fair market value was solely for the abutting properties, creating an unbiased approach. Town Attorney George Sonnett reminded Council that the price was always whatever Council agreed to. Councilman Rappaport stated that the policy was a good baseline, noting that ambiguity would never be removed.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Wood, Veitenthal, Sealock, Rappaport, Ingram, DeDomenico-Payne

No – N/A

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Request for Water and Sewer in the Rt. 340/522 Corridor for Industrial Use from 444 Baugh, LLC on Baugh Drive

Councilman Wood moved seconded by Councilman Sealock that Council, based upon a finding of sufficient excess capacity, approve a joint request from Warren County and 444 Baugh LLC for water and sewer service, not to exceed 20,850 gallons per day, within the Route 522/340 North Corridor on property identified as Tax Map 12G--2-1--10A and located on the east side of Baugh Drive supplying as many as three (3) buildings for light general industrial/warehouse use, conditioned upon conveyance to the Town of any necessary easements and the execution of an out-of-Town excess capacity utility agreement and direct the Town Manager and Town Attorney to execute the necessary agreement with the Owner requiring compliance with Town Code, and with industrial rates and charges at one hundred percent (100%) more than the in-town rates and charges.



Vice Mayor Veitenthal voiced excitement at the promise of jobs but voiced concern over the County's possible approval of not allowing industrial wells in the corridor. If it is approved, she suggested bringing forward these applications to the Liaison Meeting to discuss the County's contribution to the Town's infrastructure to supply industries with water.

Councilman Rappaport stated that the Town was positioned as the "water authority" noting that the Town had spent a large amount of money on infrastructure. He voiced excitement about the many jobs and noted that warehouses drew the least amount of water.

Councilman Ingram voiced concern about the definition of "light general industrial/warehouse". He suggested that the County define the use clearer on the application suggesting discussion at the next Liaison Meeting. He then voiced concern about approving the request now, but nothing would happen on the property until years later. Mayor Cockrell questioned whether there was a timeframe after the request was approved for something to be built; and how often the capacity was reviewed. Mr. Sonnett advised that it was not a vested right and Council would have to act to revoke the approval provided the property owner had not taken any significant action on complying with the original approval or Council could place a time limit in the agreement. Mr. Petty advised that the capacity was consistently being updated and staff was prepared when an application comes in.

Councilman Wood suggested Council begin addressing a secondary water source.

Councilman Sealock questioned whether Blue Ridge Shadows would have to abide by the Town's water conservation efforts. Mayor Cockrell noted that the question had been discussed at Liaison twice with no conclusion and suggested placing it on another Liaison Meeting agenda. Councilman Wood suggested the Town Attorney research the question reminding Council that the Town was the water/sewer provider and felt like users of the Town's services could be held accountable. Vice Mayor Veitenthal reiterated that Mr. Sonnett had discussed this with them noting it was outside the Town's jurisdiction therefore it was not enforceable, but the Town could ask the County to ensure compliance with those who receive the Town's services. Mr. Sonnett advised that while Town Code only applied within Town limits, a contractual enforcement was possible if the agreement required the use to comply with Town Code. He advised that turning the water off was a way to enforce a contractual provision. Mayor suggested to entertain at a future work session

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Wood, Sealock, Rappaport, DeDomenico-Payne

No – Councilmembers Veitenthal and Ingram

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Mayor Cockrell directed staff to place the suggestions made by Council on the next Liaison Meeting.

Retail Strategies Agreement Renewal

Councilman Wood moved seconded by Councilman Rappaport that Council approve the option of renewal with Retail Strategies in the amount of \$55,000.

Councilman Wood stated that the Town had the Front Royal Economic Development Authority (FREDA); however, there was no Economic Development Director. He advised that the Town invested a year with Retail Strategies, who were hired to attract businesses to the community, noting their time and expertise for economic growth. He supported a second year with Retail Strategies and FREDA.



Vice Mayor Veitenthal advised that she digested a lot at the work session, spoke to various local businesses and researched Retail Strategies and read the following written statement:

"I want to begin by saying that I fully support responsible, intentional economic development and the long-term success of Front Royal. My concern this evening is not with the goal of growth itself, but with the method being proposed to achieve it. We are being asked to enter into a \$55,000 contract over three years to hire a consultant to recruit retail chains, restaurants, and hotels. However, many of the examples cited as potential wins — retailers such as Harbor Freight or Wendy's — already exist in our community or in nearby markets. That raises a legitimate question about the value-added return on this investment. I also question the economic and financial benefit if, at the conclusion of a three-year, \$55,000 contract, the tangible outcome is the attraction of only one additional chain restaurant — particularly when that result may not meaningfully shift our tax base or employment landscape. At the same time, we currently have an unfunded Economic Development Authority Director position. That same \$165,000, spread over three years, could fund approximately a year and a half of a full-time, locally based economic development professional — someone embedded in our community, accountable to this council, and equipped to pursue opportunities aligned with Front Royal's unique strengths. Consultants, by nature, are temporary. They are not here day to day. They do not live in our neighborhoods, engage regularly with local business owners, or experience the rhythm and character of our town the way residents and stakeholders do. The charm of Front Royal — one of our greatest assets — cannot be fully captured through a contract; it requires lived knowledge and ongoing presence. We also need to be realistic about our current readiness for this type of recruitment. We do not have pad-ready sites available, which significantly limits our ability to attract large-scale retail or hospitality projects in a meaningful or timely way. Additionally, I want to be thoughtful about the type of growth we actively encourage. Front Royal is not a big-box destination — we are an eco-tourism gateway community. People come here for Shenandoah National Park, Skyline Drive, the Shenandoah River, our historic downtown, and our locally owned restaurants, shops, and services. That local economy is part of our identity. I am also mindful that aggressive recruitment of big-box or national retailers — including franchise gyms — can unintentionally displace highly successful, family-owned businesses already operating here, businesses that meaningfully contribute to our tax base, provide local employment, and help shape the culture and quality of life that make Front Royal special. I believe our focus should be on strengthening and supporting our existing business community, funding local economic development leadership, improving site readiness, and pursuing a strategy that aligns with who we are and what makes this town thrive — rather than outsourcing that responsibility. For these reasons, I do not support moving forward with this consulting contract at this time. I believe our tax dollars would be better invested in local expertise, infrastructure, and a long-term economic development approach that reflects Front Royal's values, character, and sustainability. "In short, I want growth that is intentional, authentic, and rooted in Front Royal — not outsourced."

She continued that various local businesses had continued to thrive without being a big box store. She voiced concern that Retail Strategies had not talked to representatives of two shopping centers in Town whom both currently have vacant spaces.

Councilman Rappaport advised that the intent of Retail Strategies was to review what the Town has and compare it to a larger market. He opined the difference in paying \$55,000 for a second year compared to the salary of an Economic Development Director. Councilman Sealock voiced concern the representative had only visited Front Royal three times.

Councilwoman DeDomenico-Payne advised that the Town Manager has an economic development background and suggested moving forward with year two with more oversight and direction by him and a mix of individuals in the community which would give the Town more leverage in decision making. Councilman Ingram voiced concern that there was no oversight during year one but liked the idea of pulling people from various organizations for year two to generate an unbiased standpoint.

Vice Mayor Veitenthal stated that her commitment was to those who elected her and allotting \$55,000 for year two and possibly year three compared to what an executive director could do was not a good steward of taxpayer money. Councilman Wood advised that Council did not budget for an executive director two years ago but have the option in upcoming budget discussions.

Mayor Cockrell read the last line of the summary... *"it is recommended that moving forward there will be meetings with Town Council and FREDa representation at regularly scheduled meeting with Retail Strategies over the next*



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The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda. This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com for a limited time.

year." She agreed that there was a lot of information given to Council at the last work session and suggested placing EDA discussion on the next Liaison Meeting.

Vote: Yes – Councilmembers Wood, Sealock, Rappaport, Ingram, DeDomenico-Payne

No – Councilmember Veitenthal

Absent – N/A

Abstain – N/A

ROLL CALL

Mayor Cockrell on behalf of herself and Council wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:17 pm.

Approved by Town Council

Date: 2/2/26

TOWN COUNCIL WENT IMMEDIATELY INTO A WORK SESSION
(minutes were prepared separately)



Roll Call by Clerk of Council

PRESENT: Mayor Lori A. Cockrell
Vice Mayor Amber F. Veitenthal
Councilwoman Melissa DeDomenico-Payne
Councilman Joshua L. Ingram
Councilman H. Bruce Rappaport
Councilman R. Wayne Sealock
Councilman Glenn E. Wood

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Manager Joseph W. Petty
Town Attorney George M. Sonnett, Jr.
Clerk of Council Tina L. Presley
Various members of the staff and public

NEW BUSINESS

Purchase of ArcGIS Enterprise Software Licensing – Purchasing Manager Michelle Campbell advised that the purchase would be from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (Esri) for software to support the newly created GIS position in their duties. Town Manager Joe Petty explained the benefits of the software that the Town has needed for a while. Council agreed to add the January 26th Consent Agenda.

Request to Vacate a Portion of the Unimproved Street between East 4th Street and Lot 16

Request to Vacate a Portion of the Unimproved Street Between East 5th Street and Happy Creek

Request to Vacate a Portion of the Unimproved Street Between East 5th Street and Lot 17A –

Mr. Petty advised that all the requests (see above) were separate applications but located next to each other, noting that two requests were from the same applicant. He explained that the unnamed street that runs along the railroad tracks was originally platted by the Front Royal and Riverton Improvement Company in the late 1800s and had been used for many years by abutting property owners. He confirmed that staff had reviewed the requests, a standard 20-foot utility easement would be requested, 4th and 5th streets were not being vacated, and he had reached out to the railroad but was waiting for a reply. He confirmed that a title exam would be required of the applicant if staff could not determine if the area was dedicated to the Town sometime in the past. Mr. Petty advised that the next step would be to advertise for a public hearing. Discussion ensued about advertising and properly notifying the abutting property owners of the public hearing. Mr. Petty confirmed that a Hold Harmless Agreement may be needed for encroaching structures over utilities or the structures would need to be removed at the owner's expense. He advised there was no way logically to connect to this street from the north or the south. Council agreed to advertise public hearings on January 26 for all three.

Request to Vacate a Portion of the Unimproved Randolph Avenue between Washington Avenue and Lot 5 – Mr. Petty advised that this area abuts the railroad tracks and one other property owner who was the applicant. He explained that the Town created a cul-de-sac at the end of the road for garbage trucks to turn around safely and the Town was requesting to expand the current easements to the standard 20-foot easement to protect the Town's infrastructure. He noted that the proposed East/West Connector Road was close but determined there would be no conflicts if established. He confirmed that no property would be landlocked. Council agreed to advertise for a public hearing on January 26 for all three.



The following minutes are a summary of items on the agenda. This meeting may be viewed in its entirety by accessing the video of the same date online via the Town's website at www.frontroyalva.com for a limited time.

Request to Vacate a Portion of the Unimproved Alley Between W. 13th & 14th Streets – Mr. Petty advised that half of the alley was improved and utilized by commercial businesses creating a very active area. He reviewed the staff comments and voiced concern about addressing the intersection at 14th Street and what may be occupying the two vacant commercial sites that abut the alley in the future. After a brief discussion Council agreed that more information was needed. Mayor Cockrell advised that she would determine which future work session it would be added to for continued discussion.

Adjourned at approximately 9:00pm.

Approved by Town Council

Date: 2/2/26